



FEBRUARY IS AMERICAN HEART MONTH

Since 1963, February has been declared American Heart Month. This month is dedicated to raising awareness about cardiovascular diseases, including heart disease and stroke – the nation’s first and third leading causes of death, respectively. Throughout the month, funds are raised for increased research and education. This month also marks the third annual “Go Red For Women” initiative, designed to raise public awareness of the fact that heart disease is the number one killer of women, claiming more women’s lives than the next six causes of death combined.

THE ABCs OF PREVENTING HEART DISEASE AND STROKE

Cardiovascular diseases can often be prevented, so understanding these diseases and their causes is life-saving information. The American Heart Association recommends these three simple steps to reduce ALL the modifiable risk factors for heart disease, heart attack, and stroke:

Avoid tobacco

Become more active

Choose good nutrition

Other actions recommended to reduce risk factors include:

Reduce blood cholesterol by lowering intake of saturated and trans fat, exercising, or medication.

Reduce high blood pressure through diet, exercise, and medication.

Be physically active every day. Research has shown that getting 30–60 minutes of physical activity most days of the week can help lower blood pressure and cholesterol.

Aim for a healthy weight to reduce risk for high cholesterol, high blood pressure and insulin resistance, a precursor of type 2 diabetes.

Manage diabetes. Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of diabetes-related death. People with diabetes are two to four times more likely to develop cardiovascular disease.

Reduce stress. Some scientists have noted a relationship between coronary heart disease risk and stress in a person's life that may affect the risk factors for heart disease.

Limit alcohol. Drinking too much alcohol can raise blood pressure, cause heart failure and lead to stroke.

HEART DISEASE RISK FACTORS

Through clinical studies, the American Heart Association has identified several factors that increase the risk of heart disease and heart attack. Some of these factors can be controlled, treated, or modified, while others cannot.

Factors that cannot be controlled:

Increasing Age

Gender (men are at greater risk)

Heredity (including race – African Americans, Mexican Americans, American Indians, native Hawaiians and some Asian Americans are at greater risk)

Factors that can be controlled, through lifestyle changes or medicine:

High blood cholesterol

High blood pressure

Smoking

Physical Inactivity

Obesity

Diabetes

Stress

Alcohol Intake

FACTS ABOUT HEART DISEASE FROM THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION:

- Nearly 930,000 Americans die of cardiovascular diseases each year, which amounts to one death every 33 seconds.
- About 70 million Americans (almost one-fourth of the population) have some form of cardiovascular disease, which is responsible for more than 6 million hospitalizations each year.
- About 90% of middle-aged Americans will develop high blood pressure in their lifetime, and nearly 70% of those who have it now do not have it under control.

Helpful Links:

[American Heart Association](#)

[Go Red For Women](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute – National Institutes of Health](#)

[U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#)